

Conservation Volunteers Honored During National Week

April 22, 2013 – San Juan, PR – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service is celebrating **National Volunteer Week** from April 21 – 27, 2013 by thanking and honoring its Earth Team volunteers for their service to conservation.

Earth Team is the agency’s volunteer workforce. Nationally, in fiscal year 2012, more than 19,000 people donated 305,564 hours of service to NRCS worth approximately \$6.7 million.



Utuaedo Field Office volunteers, Eliud Torres Vaquez (Earth Team [ET]), Erica M Claudio Rivera (Ag. student/ ET), and Gudianne Romero Mendez (Ag student/ ET) assist with pasture field fencing construction.

NRCS State Conservationist, Edwin Almodóvar, said Earth Team volunteers are making an environmental impact in the Caribbean Area. Last year 38 volunteers donated 3,834 hours. *“That’s worth \$85,534.86 of benefit to our customers and the taxpayers,”* said Almodovar. *“These are impressive numbers, and we are grateful for the help, but we also recognize much more conservation work needs to be done.”*

Earth Team is a program that partners volunteers with NRCS employees. It was created in 1985 and offers many opportunities to individuals older than 14 who are interested in volunteering to improve the nation’s natural resources. Earth Team volunteers help NRCS conservationists provide private landowners and others with a range of services from conservation technical assistance to teaching and generating awareness about conservation through the use of community projects.

“The NRCS theme for this year – ‘Celebrate Volunteers’ – puts it best,” said Director Almodóvar. *“Earth Team Volunteers allow us to stretch available resources and help us put additional conservation practices on the ground. Their volunteer efforts help us improve our land and wildlife habitat, clean our water and air, and they help us improve the environment for everyone.”*

Director Almodóvar said he hopes National Volunteer Week will motivate others to volunteer to help NRCS with its conservation mission. *“Earth Team volunteers work closely with our staff and they play an important role in our state’s conservation work. They take on a variety of conservation assignments and*

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many Earth Team Volunteers tell us they find their volunteer work enjoyable and personally very rewarding," he said.

For information on Earth Team in the Caribbean Area, contact Mr. Hilton Miró at 787-766-5206 x. 126 or Hilton.miro@pr.usda.gov. Learn more about the Earth Team Volunteer Program online at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/people/volunteers or by calling (toll-free) 1-888-526-3227. For more information on NRCS in the Caribbean Area, visit www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov.

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